

**NORTHWEST COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**

December 13, 2021

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** President DR. MARK WURZEL; Vice President/Secretary DR. LARRY TODD; Treasurer Ms. CAROLYN DANKO; and Trustees MR. JOHN HOUSEL, MS. TARA KUIPERS, MR. BOB NEWSOME, and MR. DUSTY SPOMER

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**OTHERS PRESENT:** MS. LISA WATSON, Interim President; DR. GERRY GIRAUD, Vice President for Academic Affairs; MR. DEE HAVIG, Vice President for Student Services; DR. SANDRA CALDWELL, Executive Director, WCCC; MS. ERIN TAYLOR, Executive Director, WACCT; Representative DAN LAURSEN, House District 25; Representative RACHEL RODRIGUEZ-WILLIAMS, House District 50; Representative JOHN WINTER, House District 28; MS. JILL ANDERSON; MR. ERIC ATKINSON; MR. DALTON BANKS; MS. HOLLY BERRYMAN; MR. BRAD BOWEN; MS. JENNIFER CANNIZZARO; MS. ANNA CRAGOE; DR. MARNEÉ CRAWFORD; MS. VAL CROSS; DR. MICHAEL CUDDY; DR. RENEE DECHERT; MR. DUSTIN DICKS; MR. DAVE ERICKSON; MS. KIM FLETCHER; MS. TRACY GASAWAY; MS. ALEJANDRA GONZALES; MS. LAURA GWINN; MS. AMANDA HALL; MS. JO ANN HEIMER; MR. JEREMIAH HOWE; MS. KENDLE JEFFS; MR. KEITH MCCALLISTER; DR. AMY MCKINNEY; MS. NANCY MILLER; MS. ASTRID NORTHRUP; MR. CORY OSTERMILLER; MR. DAVE PATTERSON; MR. JACOB PRICE; MR. DENNIS QUILLEN; MS. JO-EL SAUERS; MS. JEN SCHNEIDER; MS. LISA SMITH; MS. LINDA SPOMER; MR. MARTIN STENSING; MR. OSCAR TREVIÑO; MS. SHELBY WETZEL; MR. KEVIN KILLOUGH, *Powell Tribune*; and MS. KELI BORDERS, Interim Executive Secretary to the President and Board of Trustees.

**CALL TO ORDER:** The regular meeting of the Northwest College Board of Trustees was called to order on Monday, December 13, 2021, at 3:03 p.m. in the Yellowstone Building Conference Center.

**A APPROVE THE AGENDA:** **A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Todd to approve the agenda. Motion carried.**

**WORK SESSION:** Interim President Watson welcomed and introduced special guests Representative Dan Laursen, House District 25, Representative Rachel Rodriguez-Williams, House District 50, and Representative John Winter, House District 28. She then welcomed and introduced Erin Taylor, Executive Director of the Wyoming Association of Community College Trustees (WACCT) and Sandra Caldwell, Executive Director of the Wyoming Community College Commission (WCCC) who joined via Zoom.

Erin Taylor stated that in the past, the Commission has been challenged to articulate the needs of the community colleges fully. In recent years, there has been a tremendous amount of work done to be able to demonstrate the fiscal value and completion performance of the colleges and to be able to present the needs at the state level. The state of Wyoming's economy and the pandemic has impacted the colleges negatively at a time when policy leaders are relying on them even more than before. She congratulated Northwest College on its efforts to continue to serve students. Policy leaders, as well as the Governor, have spoken of the role that community colleges have played in moving the state forward.

While the Commission was having conversations with Legislators, they pressed the WCCC to develop ideas for sustainable funding for the colleges. Trustees, Administrators, and faculty across the state participated in a workgroup for several months to generate ideas and expand on the financial

needs of the community colleges. At the same time, there was a select committee of Legislators charged with studying community college governance and funding and also to develop ideas for sustainable funding. Community Colleges are not like the University of Wyoming nor K-12 in terms of how funds are allocated. This group focused on gaining the approval of Gillette College, but a sustainable funding solution for the community colleges as a whole still needs to be developed.

Ms. Taylor stated that the CREG report came out higher than anticipated, and while it's not a reason to spend extra dollars, it does provide an opportunity to reinvest in the community colleges since they have been cut so drastically in recent years. Community colleges are truly the economic engines across the state. The Joint Education Committee has considered two options: one-time ARPA money or general funds to benefit the colleges.

Two bills are moving forward to the Legislature. One is to create an endowment specifically for the community colleges that would invest a certain amount of dollars to generate interest that could be utilized annually to assist in funding the colleges. Another bill is moving forward to create an endowment that would capture opportunities for adult learners in the form of scholarships to develop a more credentialed workforce.

Ms. Taylor concluded that legislators will hear from community colleges during the Legislative Session as they make a big push for sustainable funding. There will also be a push, with support from the Governor, for compensation increases as the colleges are finding it difficult to hire employees at a competitive rate. And finally, the need to capture opportunities with the one-time money available as noted by the CREG report.

Dr. Caldwell stated there is also a draft transportation bill that has come forward. While it does not increase the tax to citizens, it carves out a portion of the 1% severance tax that already exists to provide funding to the community colleges of approximately \$25 million in a biennium.

Ms. Taylor explained further that the portion designated to the colleges in the bill does not take away money from another agency but instead diverts money going into savings. Of the 1% severance tax, the bill proposes 70% of that go to the Highway Department and 30% go to the colleges. She stated that when a diversion is created, it's usually for a short period and not a permanent solution.

Interim President Watson stated that Northwest College receives funding three different ways. Through state appropriations, local levies, and student tuition and fees. In the past, that breakdown consisted of a 60/20/20 percent split respectively. Currently, that split is 52/20/28 percent, with the students carrying a higher burden with increased tuition and fees. Northwest College has lost over 80 employees and several million dollars in its operational budget lines. She hopes there are creative ways to implement additional funding to the colleges through the proposed bills and the one-time money that does not increase the burden to the citizens of Wyoming while keeping costs down for students.

Interim President Watson directed Trustees' attention to a handout prepared by the WCCC, which provides the various ways community colleges serve their respective communities.

Trustee Kuipers expressed her appreciation of the information that Ms. Taylor and Dr. Caldwell presented. She feels the terminology "economic engine" to describe community colleges is especially fitting. Northwest College is a

significant employer in the community and contributes to the local economy. Also, the ability to partner with K-12, the University of Wyoming, and other institutions is an economic driver. Economic development and educating citizens who will stay in Wyoming are preeminent in improving the state's economy.

Trustee Kuipers also noted that Joint Appropriations, Joint Education, and the Transportation Committee have all drafted funding solutions for community colleges. Having community college funding needs elevated by three different committees in one Legislative Session is evidence of the critical nature of the conversation moving forward.

Dr. Caldwell stated that the WCCC has attempted to clarify to Legislators that community colleges are constantly evolving their programs to ensure they are not stagnant. All colleges utilize Advisory Committees and change or add programs based on business and industry needs. She stated the colleges are excellent stewards of their funds and make sure their programs are relevant and current.

In response to a question from Representative Laursen related to Northwest College's use of CARES funds, Interim President Watson stated the money was split between the institution and the students. The college utilized the first round of funds to purchase equipment and supplies to manage the operations and provide instruction during the pandemic. The technical offerings have been expanded to be flexible and are still being utilized today. The second round of funds allowed the College to reclaim lost revenues, such as housing and food service funds refunded to students when the campus closed due to the pandemic. The College was mindful in using the funds for programmatic expansion or operational needs. Of the \$4.3 million that was awarded to Northwest College, close to half of that was distributed to students. Of the Governor's ARPA funds, he awarded the colleges \$27 million in one-time-only funds that have been designated to specific colleges for specific uses. Northwest College received \$1.8 million of those funds for hospitality, tourism, and outdoor recreation expansion.

In response to a question from Representative Laursen related to the College's relationship with UW, Interim President Watson stated that is one of the benefits of WIP. As part of the conversation related to the ARPA funds, the Governor wants to build collaboration between the community colleges and UW. The Presidents of all the colleges have been meeting regularly for six months and discussing ways to serve the Governor's request and put forth proposals related to his Survive, Drive, and Thrive initiative. Interim President Watson stated that historically, Northwest College has always been viewed positively by UW in terms of transfer.

President Wurzel gave an example of both colleges working together, such as in the case of Dr. Amy McKinney's class on the History of Women and the American West, which is also being taught at the University. Dr. McKinney and UW's instructor collaborated to bring the two classes together for interaction via Zoom.

In response to a question from Representative Laursen, Interim President Watson stated Northwest College receives one mil from the county in unrestricted funds. Just a few years ago, that equated to approximately 1 million dollars, while today, the value is closer to \$650,000 due to declining coal, oil, and gas revenues. She stated there had been discussion regarding the difference between the tax district and the service region in relation to

assistance for the community colleges by broadening the service area. Representative Laursen stated he would be in support of additional mil levies from other counties as they are also receiving the benefits from community colleges.

In response to a question from Trustee Danko, Representative Laursen stated he does not support the corporate income tax on businesses such as Walmart. He feels they are paying their share by hiring the citizens of Wyoming. His concern is that if corporations are taxed heavily by the state, they may choose not to stay in Wyoming.

Dr. Caldwell stated that a report was provided to the LSO and presented to the JEC regarding the funds received by the community colleges through the three HEERF tranches. The funds received did not mitigate the total costs of the impact of COVID on the colleges. While they can use the money for some revenue loss from students, they were not permitted to use the funds to fill in gaps in their budgets due to cuts.

Dr. Caldwell also clarified the mill levy that is not currently paid by the community colleges' service districts is included in the sustainable funding study matrix of final recommendations that have been provided to the Legislature.

Trustee Spomer stated that Legislators have looked for perceived bloat in state agencies over the last several years in terms of excess spending. A previous example used was the suggestion that four employees were doing a job that three could handle. He encouraged Legislators to visit with Interim President Watson to learn what that currently looks like at Northwest College. In our case, there are situations where one person doing the job of three. He feels it's essential to understand the limitations that places on the College in terms of sustainability and growth. He asks that Legislators consider this reality when looking at future funding for community colleges.

Representative Rodriguez-Williams stated that workforce is a big issue in Park County, and she hears from constituents of their difficulty in finding employees. Legislators pass legislation to promote economic development to build business-friendly communities. She is wondering if there is a resource available that would list programs, programs being considered or decided against, etc., to inform the community.

Interim President Watson stated that Northwest College participates in programs such as Forward Cody and Powell Economic Partnership to gain knowledge of the needs of area businesses. Advisory groups are utilized by various College programs to gather ideas and feedback. Economic reports are received from the state and community level that inform on growing areas of interest in career development. Northwest College undergoes a very structured programmatic assessment process and is constantly looking for areas of growth for Wyoming. Each potential program must be evaluated for cost-effectiveness and sustainability.

Representative Winters stated that his district represents three different counties in the Big Horn Basin. He questioned what support these counties provide to Northwest College and, in turn, what services does the College provide to these communities.

Interim President Watson stated that based on the mil levy statute, Park is the only county within the Big Horn Basin that provides mandated financial support to the College. The students from outside of Park County support the

College through tuition, fees, etc. These students are part of the FTE number used in the funding formula to determine state support. Northwest College serves the students by being available for live and online classes and by offering dual and concurrent courses for high school and home school students. The College also attends and participates in economic development meetings throughout the Big Horn Basin to determine if there are businesses that can be served. The colleges do not request funds from county Commissioners outside their tax districts.

**A CONSENT AGENDA:**

**A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Danko to approve the consent agenda.**

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, Interim President Watson stated the \$1.8 million that Northwest College was awarded as part of the Governor's Phase One of the WIP initiative is to be utilized for the expansion of the tourism and outdoor recreation programming. That funding may not be used to construct new walls but can finish the walls for educational use. The Student Center project that the Legislature has already approved includes expanding Outdoor Recreation. There is potential flexibility to include that in the Student Center project, but that is a decision the College and the Board must make as the College would need to match state dollars on the project.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel, Interim President Watson stated there were several presentations at the Governor's Business Forum related to Wyoming's future. Expansion of existing and new options relations to energy, expanding new industry sectors, and a continued focus on educating our citizenry where just a few topics covered.

Trustee Housel expressed his appreciation for the College's participation in the Cody Christmas parade and the other parades in the area. Interim President Watson stated that Intercultural Program Director Amanda Enriquez has taken the parade project on as an area of support this year and has done a fantastic job. She also expressed her appreciation to the Music Department for providing music and the faculty, staff, and students who have participated by walking with the float and passing out candy.

Trustee Housel expressed his interest in the preliminary discussion of developing a BAS degree in Criminal Justice. Interim President Watson stated there are additional programs considering BAS degrees as well.

In response to a question from Trustee Housel related to the E-Sports program, Interim President Watson stated the E-Sports team is in the playoffs. She expressed her appreciation to Brian Erickson and Chris Dugger for developing and growing the program. Interim Vice President Havig stated there are over twenty participants with more anticipated in the spring. Recently, many prospective students were interested in learning more about the program during Preview day.

**Motion carried, and the consent agenda, including the minutes of the November 4, 2021, special meeting and the November 8, 2021, regular meeting, were approved.**

**DISCUSSION/  
INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

Special Announcement – NWC Foundation

Executive Director of the NWC Foundation Shelby Wetzel expressed her excitement to announce a \$3 million gift provided by a local alumni couple who are choosing to refrain from publicity. This is the largest single gift in the Foundation's history. The contribution is ground-breaking as it will create two

endowed chairs for Northwest College; one in Education and one in Science. As a point of clarification, Shelby stated named faculty positions are not necessarily linked to the Division Chair position title we currently use. Each position will see \$1.5 million invested with proceeds to support the salary, a small amount for professional development, and innovative curriculum development funds to bring exceptional student learning opportunities in the classroom.

Shelby stated that Dr. Giraud, Vice President for Academic Affairs, will facilitate a process this spring with faculty peer reviewers, bringing forward and recommending candidates for appointment by the President for the two named positions. The appointments will begin in July 2022 and run on a three-year rotation.

The donor was born and raised locally and an alumnus of Northwest College. His wife also took many general education classes, and they both had a love of the College. Shelby stated that Northwest College is blessed to receive this gift from individuals passionate about the College and sustaining high-quality academics for students.

Interim President Watson stated this is a landmark moment for the College, and it's incredible to see the impact Northwest College has had on our students and community members. She expressed her appreciation to Shelby for her work on this project. She added what a reflection this is on her ability to build strong relationships with our alumni or community members and provide them with an avenue to give back in such a meaningful way.

Governor's Budget and WIP  
update

Interim President Watson stated the Governor has put out a very conservative budget. The CREG report suggests that projected revenues are relatively positive. She appreciates the three draft bills mentioned earlier that could provide ongoing support for the Colleges but recognizes that many agencies will also be making requests for additional funds. The Governor has included compensation adjustments in his budget that she hopes will be supported. The Presidents will be working diligently prior to and during the Session to educate Legislators on the needs of the Colleges.

Interim President Watson stated the Governor is expected to bring forth his proposals for the remaining ARPA funds on Thursday, December 16, 2021. She noted the Colleges put forth a request for \$100 million but reminded Trustees that the Governor received requests in the amount of \$3 billion and has \$500 million to disperse.

Regardless of the outcome of the Legislative work, the Colleges (UW and the Community Colleges) will continue to work and expand their consortium relationship that will make and create opportunities for students.

## **CITIZENS' OPEN FORUM**

The Citizens' Open Forum convened at 5:00 p.m. No citizens requested to address the Board; therefore, the Citizen's Open Forum adjourned.

### **A UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

Audit approval (second reading)

**A motion was made by Trustee Spomer and seconded by Trustee Newsome to accept the audit report as presented. Motion carried.**

### **A NEW BUSINESS:**

Course/lab fee proposals

**A motion was made by Trustee Danko and seconded by Trustee Kuipers to approve the Course/Lab Fee proposals as presented. Motion carried.**

Major Maintenance projects memo

Interim President Watson explained the Legislature reinstated Major

Maintenance funds to the College that were previously cut. This created an opportunity to move up projects on the timeline from what was approved by the Board in Spring 2021.

**A motion was made by Trustee Kuipers and seconded by Trustee Danko to approve the Major Maintenance project revisions as presented. Motion carried.**

**ELECTION OF OFFICERS  
AND COMMITTEE  
APPOINTMENTS**

Trustee Spomer presented the nominations for officers proposed by the Nomination Committee as follows:

- Trustee Mark Wurzel as President
- Trustee Larry Todd as Vice President/Secretary
- Trustee Carolyn Danko as Treasurer.

**Trustees voted to elect Trustee Mark Wurzel as President, Trustee Larry Todd as Vice President/Secretary, and Trustee Carolyn Danko as Treasurer.**

Trustee Housel expressed his desire to shift from the Policy and Student Success Committee to the Facilities Committee.

Board President Wurzel stated he would shift Committee appointments and recommend assignments at the next meeting.

**ANNUAL SIGNING OF THE  
BOARD CODE OF ETHICS  
MOMENT OF SILENCE**

Board President Wurzel requested that Trustees sign the Board Code of Ethics policy and return them to Keli.

Trustees observed a moment of silence for Northwest College employee Jay Costigan, who passed away on December 9, 2021.

**FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS &  
FEEDBACK TO CITIZENS'  
OPEN FORUM TOPICS:**

January Upcoming:

- Disclosure of Interest forms
- Wyoming Postsecondary Education Options Report
- Other TBD

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Next meeting January 10, 2022, 3:00 p.m., Yellowstone Building  
Board Retreat January 11, 2022, location TBD  
Spring semester classes begin, January 19, 2022  
ACCT National Legislative Summit, February 6-9, 2022, Washington D.C.  
WCCC Meeting, February 5, 2022, LCCC Cheyenne

**A ADJOURNMENT:**

**The meeting adjourned at 5:26 p.m.**

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LARRY TODD, Vice President/Secretary

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Date